THREE

Building Pandaemonium

Vitruvian Architecture in *Paradise Lost*

> And what will they at best say of us and of the whole English name, but scoffingly as of that foolish builder, mention'd by our Saviour, who began to build a tower, and was not able to finish it. Where is this goodly tower of a Common-wealth which the *English* boasted they would build to overshaddow kings and be another *Rome* in the west? The foundation indeed they laid gallantly; but fell into a wors confusion, not of tongues, but of factions, then those at the tower of *Babel*; and have left no memorial of thir work behinde them remaining, but in the common laughter of *Europ*.
>
> *The Readie and Easie Way* (YP 7:422–23)

I begin with this excerpt from *The Readie & Easie Way* because it draws together a cluster of Miltonic preoccupations that are fundamental to my discussion of architecture in *Paradise Lost*. In the prose passage, alluding to Luke's gospel and the Book of Genesis, Milton adduces images of towers from

both the New and Old Testaments — in that characteristic, recursive order[1] — to chide his audience for their failure to advance "the Good Old Cause." While the passage seems primarily calculated to scold Milton's audience for their recent backsliding, the image of the "goodly tower," figuring a thoroughly reformed and reconstructed state, holds out the possibility of a positive future for England. In that sense the tower image has palpable rhetorical force, through its appeal to the English reformers to make good on their earlier boasting. Making good on a boast, one recalls from *Beowulf*, has long been a matter of honor for English speakers. Moreover, the image of the Commonwealth as a structure built to "overshaddow kings" is politically astute. On the occasion of the monarchy's impending restoration, Milton deftly sketches a tattling Europe in which a more or less thoroughly reformed England will find itself either a leader or a laughingstock. Placing the immediate situation in a longer temporal framework, Milton reminds the builders of the Commonwealth that they had for England a yet unrealized ambition: to be "another *Rome* in the west."[2] In *Of Reformation* (1641) almost twenty years earlier, Milton had advocated classical republican precedents for the political structure of the Commonwealth, including chiefly a theory of the "mixed state" that Polybius saw exemplified by the Roman republic.[3] While Milton's notion of the ideal political establishment in England evolved through the 1640s and 1650s, he continued to advocate the Roman republic, though tempered with Machiavellian realpolitik, as late as the second edition of *The Readie and Easie Way*, Nigel Smith contends (193–95). For Milton as for many supporters of "the Good Old Cause," ancient Rome embodied the premiere model of a flourishing culture and government that England should emulate.

These same Miltonic preoccupations — typological treatment of Scripture, architectural imagery, political briefing, classical Roman models — appear in a new configuration when

Milton describes the building of Pandaemonium in book 1 of *Paradise Lost*. The architectural part of that new configuration derives from the presence of another Roman author, Vitruvius Pollio, who in the first century before Christ was chiefly responsible for Augustus Caesar's public building campaign.[4] Vitruvius, in the ten books of his *De architectura* (ca. 28 B.C.), expounds the essential principles that Milton invokes in the scene. This is not to say that Milton was ignorant of other architectural models or that his Pandaemonium reflects nothing from architectural theory and practice among his near contemporaries such as Palladius, Leon Battista Alberti, Sebastiano Serlio, Giorgio Vasari, and Inigo Jones. A fuller, contextualized account of Milton's collective architectural inheritance than is possible here would surely enrich and complicate our understanding of Milton's notions of the art of building.[5] In any responsible account of Milton and architecture, however, I submit that Vitruvius would remain the central and primary figure. First of all, Vitruvius is the one architect whom Milton recommends by name. In addition to Milton's singling out Vitruvius in *Of Education*, Edward Phillips recalls in his brief biography of the poet that Milton included "Vitruvius his *Architecture*" in the curriculum of his private tutorial during the 1640s (Hughes, 634, 1029). While typically absent from academic curricula, the text of Vitruvius was often put to practical use by Renaissance builders. For example, one copy of Vitruvius published by Guinta in Florence, 1513, in a small octavo size, contains dozens of annotations of a practical, rather than scholarly nature.[6] All of the Renaissance architects mentioned above regard him as their chief authority and precursor. Breathtaking technical developments in single-point perspective and domed roofing, to name only two, are directly traceable to sentences in the text of Vitruvius. In short, Vitruvius was "highly valued by architects all over western Europe in the seventeenth century" (Hughes, 634 n. 34). I intend to focus on one well-known Renaissance architect

whose exposition of Vitruvius adds a fresh perspective on the Roman architect's theory. To understand the building of Pandaemonium requires a reading of its double possibility akin to the hermeneutic Milton focused on the tower imagery in *The Readie and Easie Way*. To put it simply, Pandaemonium is designed to stand as an image of both good and bad building. Such a building is at once worse than the Tower of Babel and better than the unfinished "goodly tower of a Commonwealth." When we read Pandaemonium in this way, we stand to recover a sense of Milton's daring narrative strategy, inviting readers to marvel at demonic echoes of the architectural achievements of the high Renaissance.

We may begin with the more obvious sense in which Pandaemonium is a negative image. Traditionally, one way of reading Pandaemonium as an image *in malo* has been to regard the palace essentially as a locus of anti-Catholic satire. In 1931, Rebecca W. Smith drew a sharp distinction between the "generalized summary of Roman architecture" presented in Satan's panorama in book 4 of *Paradise Regained* and the "individual scene, with vivid, precise details and a definite location" of Pandaemonium in *Paradise Lost* (187). For the latter, Smith argues, Milton supplemented his reading with personal recollections of St. Peter's in Rome. For example, Milton's epic bee simile earlier in book 1 does more than imitate its Homeric and Vergilian precursors. At the Barberini palace Milton would surely have seen the bronze sculptures of bees emblematic of Pope Urban VIII. The subtly unresolved question in Milton's simile of who controls the bees would have recalled Protestant and Catholic arguments over the pope's putative supremacy, arguments Milton had disputed with Salmasius in *A Defense of the English People*. Likewise, through specific references to ecclesiastical terms such as "conclave" (1.795), by which Catholics designated an assembly to elect a pope, Milton in Smith's words "ascribes to the conferences of Satan and his peers the secrecy and dark designs that Protestants of his day

denounced in the Church of Rome" (193–94). Taking Smith's analysis of the Roman church as the single, definitive source for Pandaemonium, William Riley Parker best summarizes the satiric reading of the scene. Parker links the account of Pandaemonium directly to Milton's visit to Rome in 1638: "Standing at last in St. Peter's, Milton must have felt it to be an architectural blasphemy, a perversion of true worship, a cathedral more fit for devils" (1:172–73).

The trouble with the satiric reading is not that it is false. Throughout his career Milton had rallied Protestant readers to his cause by mocking Catholic institutions. He does so most famously perhaps in his humorous indictment in *Areopagitica* of five imprimaturs conferring "in the Piatza of one Title page, complimenting and ducking each to other with their shav'n reverences" (YP 2:504). Certainly Pandaemonium is a place, in Parker's phrase, "fit for devils." To the extent that the quintessential Catholic structure would signal to Milton's readers a perversion of true religion, Pandaemonium delivers a satiric barb at the papacy. But would not Milton's "fit audience" take for granted the corruption of the Roman church? Why would Milton lavish such painstaking attention on an image he wished *only* to explode? Simply regarding Pandaemonium as the creation of demonic papists seems to distance and dismiss the scene too comfortably, in a way inconsistent with the troubling appeal of Satan himself in book 1.

Before asserting a positive view of Pandaemonium, one ought perhaps to anticipate the objection that the iconoclast Milton would oppose such a positive view of any church edifice. The evidence of the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral, where Cromwell's soldiers literally defaced or where possible beheaded the stone statues of Roman Catholic saintly icons, points to a literal iconoclasm of church architecture that Milton at least endured — if not applauded — without recorded objection. Milton's assaults on nonscriptural forms of worship and government do seem at times consistent with Puritan

attacks on false icons. Thanks to Sanford Budick, Paul Stevens, David Loewenstein, Lana Cable, Michael Lieb, and others, however, Milton scholarship has come a long way from equating Milton's icastic imagination with simple-minded destructiveness or visual incapacity.[7] As an overview of this issue, W. J. T. Mitchell's summary best represents my position: "Milton's poetry is the scene of a struggle between iconoclastic distrust of the outward image and iconophilic fascination with its power" (36). In the opening invocation to *Paradise Lost* Milton asserts that the Spirit prefers "[b]efore all Temples th'upright heart and pure" (1.18); on a superficial reading, this line might be taken as a rejection of all houses of worship. Rather than denying that church buildings have any value, however, Milton's phrasing makes temples the positive standard that the worshipful human heart yet overgoes. To be sure, there are buildings as decadent as the cultures they represent: the Philistian temple in *Samson Agonistes* is the obvious example. Yet not even Samson's ultimate dismantling of the Temple of Dagon dismisses all building as vain or negative. After the tragedy, Manoa will bring Samson "[h]ome to his Father's house: there will I build him/A monument" which will commemorate Samson and rally "all the valiant youth," inflaming them to "matchless valor, and adventures high" (1739–40). It is precisely architecture's power to *impress* the observer, I shall argue, upon which Milton draws in *Paradise Lost*. And whereas the Son in *Paradise Regained* rejects Satan's impressive offer of the panorama of imperial Rome, that epic culminates on the pinnacle of the temple, with the Son embodying a typological kind of architectural flourish, before the victor returns to his mother's *house*. Parallel to the "goodly" but incomplete tower in *The Readie and Easie Way* that could "overshaddow kings," the palace of Pandaemonium reflects sound aesthetic and architectural principles. That these positive features are weighted down, even perverted by teleological misappropriation in no way cancels the architectural virtues

of the edifice. Instead, such failings and exaggerations in demonic architecture may lead readers to reflect on the opportunities for appropriate building squandered by human architects. The Commonwealth, alas, was sorely in need of master builders.

The sequence by which Milton introduces Pandaemonium to readers of *Paradise Lost* hints at the double strategy of celebrating and undermining the structure. This doubleness is reflected in the two grammatical senses of "building": the gerund (as in "Building takes time") referring to an unfolding process; the substantive (as in "What a fine building!") to a finished product. The satiric coloring of Pandaemonium is applied to the finished structure only *after* we have seen the building process completed. For example, Milton's depiction of the assembly as a "secret conclave" (795), in the last sentence describing the scene, associates the devils' meeting with Catholic practice after we have seen the building rise. Likewise, the bee simile linking the palace with the Barberini papacy appears only *after* the devils have assembled or "swarm'd" into the completed edifice. Preceding that simile is the narrator's celebrated correction of human error in ascribing the name "Mulciber" to the palace's demonic architect. Indeed the collective effect of these authorial comments is to undermine whatever admiration readers may have felt about the glorious scene of Pandaemonium. Such a corrective strategy logically implies, of course, that an initially positive response to the place was expected and appropriate.

As a hinge between those later comments and the description of the actual scene of building Pandaemonium, Milton describes the impressive effect the palace has on those who enter:

> The hasty multitude
> Admiring enter'd, and the work some praise
> And some the Architect: his hand was known
> In Heav'n by many a Tow'red structure high,
> Where Scepter'd Angels held thir residence.
> (1.730–34)

The devils universally admire, but their differing responses divide them into two groups: some admiring the craftsmanship ("the work some praise") and others the architect. The doubleness in the devils' response may reflect the English Renaissance debate over the relative merits of architects and artisans. John Dee, in his 1570 preface to Euclid's *Elements*, had insisted on the gulf between the architect's intellectual achievement and the craftsman's handiwork. Paraphrasing Vitruvius, Dee claims that the architect is no mere "Artificer" but the "Hed, the Provost, the Director, and Judge of all Artificiall workes, and all Artificers" (d.iiij–v.). Likewise, Sir Henry Wotton writes in his *Elements of Architecture* that the architect's chief "glory" consists "in the Designment and Idea of the whole Worke, and his truest ambition should be to make the Forme, which is the nobler Part (as it were) triumph over the Matter" (11–12). Specifically, Wotton cites on this point Book 6, heading 2 of *De architectura*, which claims that an architect's greatest care must be to find the exact mathematical proportion that determines a building's design. Two factors point to Wotton as the conduit for Milton's awareness of this issue: Milton's cordial relationship with the English ambassador to Venice, attested by Wotton's glowing letter of introduction for the younger man; and their mutual reliance on Vitruvius, whom Wotton several times calls "our principal Master." In any case, Milton's verse paragraph makes one undeniable point: the architect behind Pandaemonium is the same architect renowned for designing many magnificent dwellings in heaven. Those structures are described in unequivocally positive fashion. The only note of discord in Milton's scene is the elegiac tone deriving from the past tense: "where Scepter'd Angels *held* thir residence" (my italics).

Assuming that the architect's skill remained constant from his tenure in heaven to his relocation to hell, a reader gathers from this transitional passage evidence attesting to the demonic architect's continuing mastery of the art.

A master architect's plan is likewise discernible in the initial description of Pandaemonium's rise. The principles of Vitruvius, adumbrated by several Renaissance architects, pervade Milton's description. To begin with, in describing the combining of various materials into a single "mould" for the building, he draws a precise musical analogy: "As in an Organ from one blast of wind/To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breathes" (708–09). In the surviving manuscript of book 1 edited by Helen Darbishire, a scribe alleged to be Edward Phillips has written "a row of" over the lined-out "an hundred" and added an "s" to "Pipe" (Darbishire, 68). The change focuses Milton's simile on an organ, making it at once more orderly and more visually concrete. The specific vehicle of Milton's comparison, the organ's sounding board that conveys architectonic unity and harmony, derives from Vitruvius. In discussing the design of theaters in book 5 of *De architectura*, Vitruvius tells how ancient architects considered acoustics:

> et quaesierunt per canonicam mathematicorum et musican rationem, ut, quaecumque vox esset in scaena, clarior et suavior ad spectatorum perveniret aures. uti enim organa in aeneis lamminis aut corneis echeis ad cordarum sonitum claritatem perficiuntur, sic theatrorum per harmonicen ad augendam vocem ratiocinationes ab antiquis sunt constitutae. (5.3.8)
>
> By the rules of mathematics and the method of music, they sought to make whatever voice from the stage clearer and sweeter to the listeners' ears. For as organs in bronze plates or horn sounding boards are tuned to the clarity of the sounds of stringed instruments, so through the harmonic arrangement of theatres the principles of acoustics were established by the ancients.

In keeping with his requirement that the perfect architect know all arts and sciences,[8] Vitruvius articulates an architectural principle that depends upon music and mathematics. He takes the harmonic tuning of the sounding board as the standard for acoustic design; Milton's devils rely on this notion in laying the foundation of Pandaemonium.

When we hear next in Milton's narrative how Pandaemonium arose on its site, Vitruvian doctrine and demonic practice unfold inseparably. Describing the distinctive features of the building from bottom to top, Milton's single, sinuous sentence mimics the vertical rise of Pandaemonium:

> Anon out of the earth a Fabric huge
> Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound
> Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,
> Built like a Temple, where *Pilasters* round
> Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
> With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
> Cornice or Frieze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n;
> The Roof was fretted Gold.
>
> (710–17)

The generic term Milton uses to describe Pandaemonium is "Fabric." Vitruvius had used the Latin word *fabrica* to refer both to particular buildings and to the art of architecture. Accordingly, "*fabrica*," "fabric," or "*fabrique*" became the Renaissance terms of art for an architecturally composed building. Wotton routinely refers to buildings as "fabrics," pausing once to translate the term: "*Vna Fabrica ben raccolta*: as *Italians* use to speake of well united Workes" (68). Using the phrase "fabricke of man," Sir Thomas Browne in *Religio medici* extends the architectural term to human anatomy, and thence to an argument for the inorganic nature of the soul.[10] The various architectural features of the fabric that Milton describes can all be traced to Vitruvius, but they can just as easily be illustrated by dozens of Renaissance structures. Above all, Pandaemonium stands as a "a Fabric huge": it presents to the eye a grand spectacle of imperial power and magnificence.

Milton takes particular care to point out that Pandaemonium is "[b]uilt like a Temple." Rebecca Smith emphasizes

the negative implication of that description. Pandaemonium is *not* a temple but a palace in temple style, she remarks, which reflects the devilish building's perversion (192–94). I suggest that the perversion Smith stresses coincides with an undeniably impressive aspect of Pandaemonium. To say that Pandaemonium is "built like a Temple," or built in the style of an ancient temple, is to say that it resembles in its basic design the grandest and most celebrated Renaissance churches. William A. McClung has recently added the Temple of Jerusalem, a scholarly reconstruction of which was published at Rome in 1604, to the list of possible precedents for Pandemonium. McClung notes the tradition that the Vitruvian canon informing that temple had been delivered by God to the Hebrews.[10] I caution, however, against the definite identification of any single edifice with Milton's poetic image of Pandaemonium. The ambiguity of Milton's poetic utterance "built like a temple," doubly indefinite through its use of simile and indefinite article, certainly creates space for a range of possible models. Rather than being modeled exclusively on St. Peter's in Rome, Pandaemonium more generally reflects the magnificent church buildings built along Roman lines that Milton knew.

Here again the revival of Vitruvius in the Renaissance provides illumination for Milton's verse account. Cesariano's commentary in his 1521 edition of Vitruvius had issued a sharp challenge to aspiring architects. Domestic architecture is easy in comparison with designing a sacred building, Cesariano writes, "with its fitting parts proportioned and diligently harmonized."[11] The comment may reflect credit on the builder of Pandaemonium, who previously had designed dwellings for the angels. In the opening chapter of the third book of *De architectura*, Vitruvius had introduced his famous observations on the proportions of the human figure which are to be reflected in the overall proportions of temples. Vitruvius explains how the human figure with extended hands and feet fits perfectly into the two putatively perfect geometrical figures:

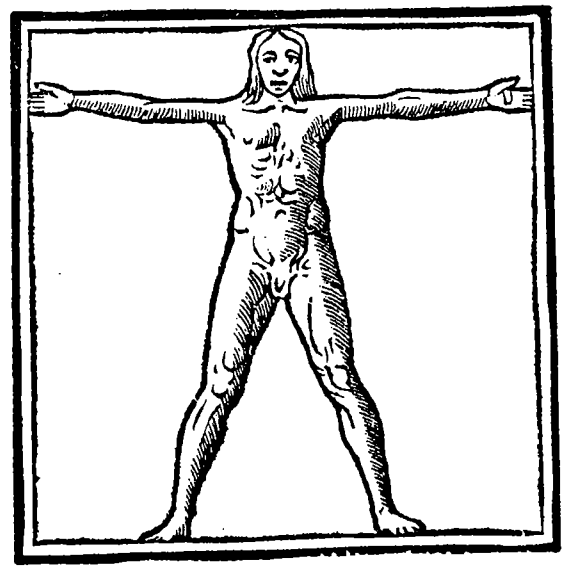

Figure 2. *"Homo ad Quadratum." M. Vitruvius per Vocundum* (Venice, 1511). Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

Figure 3. *"Homo ad Circulum." M. Vitruvius per Vocundum* (Venice, 1511). Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

the square and the circle. Fra Giacondo, in his Venice, 1511 edition, provided woodcut illustrations of Vitruvius's "homo ad quadratum" and "homo ad circulum" (figs. 2 and 3). For Renaissance thinkers, Vitruvius's enclosure of the human figure within these perfect geometrical forms led to profound speculations, both architectural and theological. "This simple picture," Rudolf Wittkower remarks, "seemed to reveal a deep and fundamental truth about man and the world, and its importance for Renaissance architects can hardly be overestimated. The image haunted their imagination" (22).

Indeed, Renaissance commentators on Vitruvius elaborated, in a variety of ways, upon this picture of the human form circumscribed and ensquared. Cesariano's edition takes a graphic, mathematical turn by generating a circle within a grid of smaller squares inside a single square encompassing the human form (fig. 4). This geometric grid evokes a mechanistic view of the inscribed human being. A sequence of Cesariano's prominent illustrations, one each from books 1, 3, and 5 of Vitruvius's text (figs. 5, 6, and 7), constitutes a triptych visually linking cathedral architecture, the human body, and theatrical design. What draws these three images together is the combination of circles and squares, deriving from the measure of the proportions of the central human figure. Part of the wit of the triptych appears in the flanking illustrations, which display on the one hand the potential for creating the grandest space for worship of the divine, and on the other an impressive space for worldly display, with demonic figures perched in its highest spaces. Within Milton's poem, God's act of circumscribing the universe with "golden compasses" (7.225–27), thereby casting God as divine architect, is the central reflection of such geometrical anthropomorphism. In William Blake's vision a century later, Milton's account of the compass-wielding Creator has hardened into a mechanistic architect, one indistinguishable from the self-involved Newton

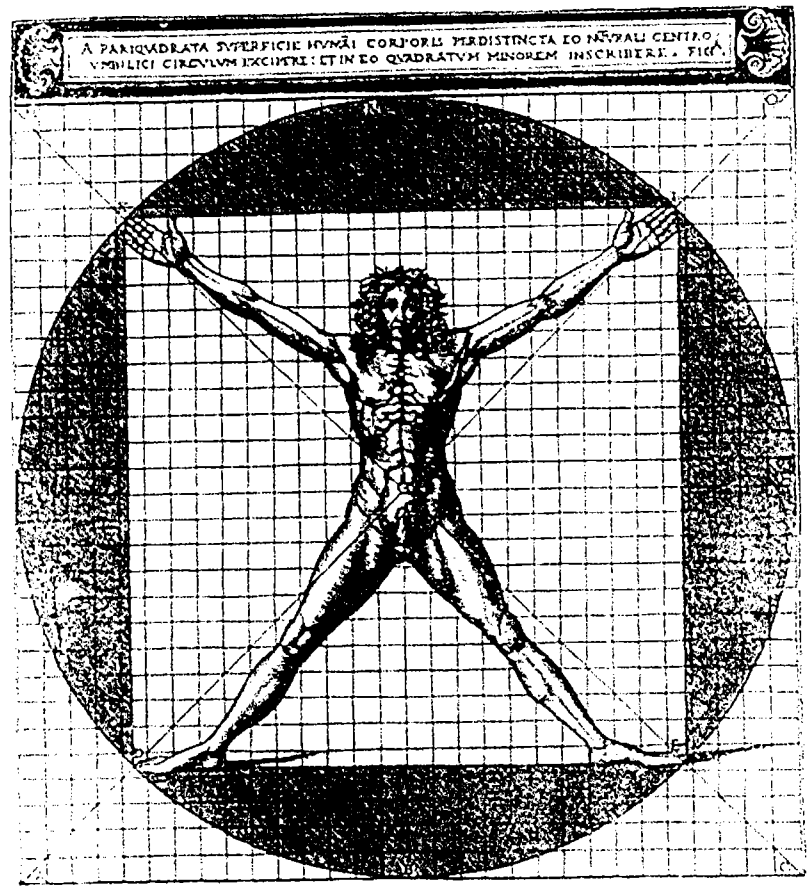

Figure 4. *Vitruvian figure.* Cesariano's *Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de Architectura* (Como, 1521). Courtesy of Special Collections and Rare Books Dept., University of Minnesota Libraries.

who, through the false liberation promised by the calculus, reduced human potential to a mere ratio.

Yet the ambiguous vision of Milton's poem resists the hard-edged mechanism of Cesariano's and Blake's illustrations. When Satan escapes the realms of Chaos and Night and once

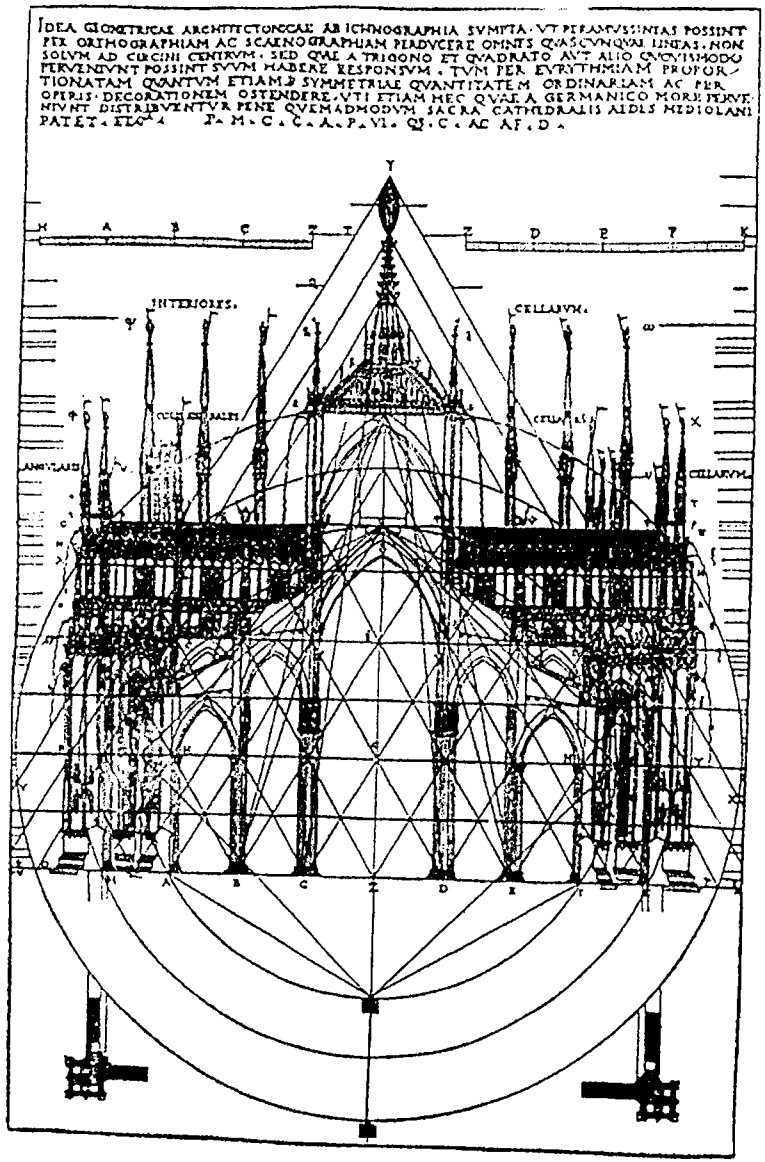

Figure 5. *Cathedral design.* Vitruvius, *De architectura*, book 1 (Florence, 1522). Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

again glimpses heaven, his vision employs the geometric forms of circle and square, but the devil cannot resolve what he sees into one definite pattern. Satan beholds

> Far off th'Empyreal Heav'n, extended wide
> In circuit, undetermin'd square or round,
> With Opal Tow'rs and Battlements adorn'd
> Of living Sapphire, once his native Seat.
>
> (2.1047–50)

After the Fall, Sin mockingly asserts the superiority of Satan's "orbicular world" (10.381) to God's "quadrature," assuming that the sphere is a more perfect form than the cube. Sin's attempt to set these two forms at odds, however, ironically draws together what she would oppose, and moreover overlooks the mysterious fusion of spirit and matter in the human form typically symbolized by the squaring of the circle.[12] Indeed, from the sentence first naming Pandaemonium, Milton has playfully associated both circle and square with the fallen angels. There the demonic heralds proclaim:

> A solemn council forthwith to be held
> At *Pandaemonium*, the high capital
> Of Satan and his peers: their summons called
> From every *band* and *squared* regiment
> By place or choice the worthiest.
>
> (1.755–59; my italics, line 758)

The pun on "band" enables the word, with its double sense of a circle and a military unit, to balance "squared regiment." The "capital" in Milton's sentence has an obvious Roman precedent as well, alluding to the Roman capitol, where assemblies of leaders debated peace or war. As the dominating structure of Pandaemonium itself, the capitol has patent architectural significance.

Perhaps the illustration of Vitruvius most influential upon Milton's scene is also the most familiar. Behind Leonardo da Vinci's immediately recognizable drawing of a circumscribed

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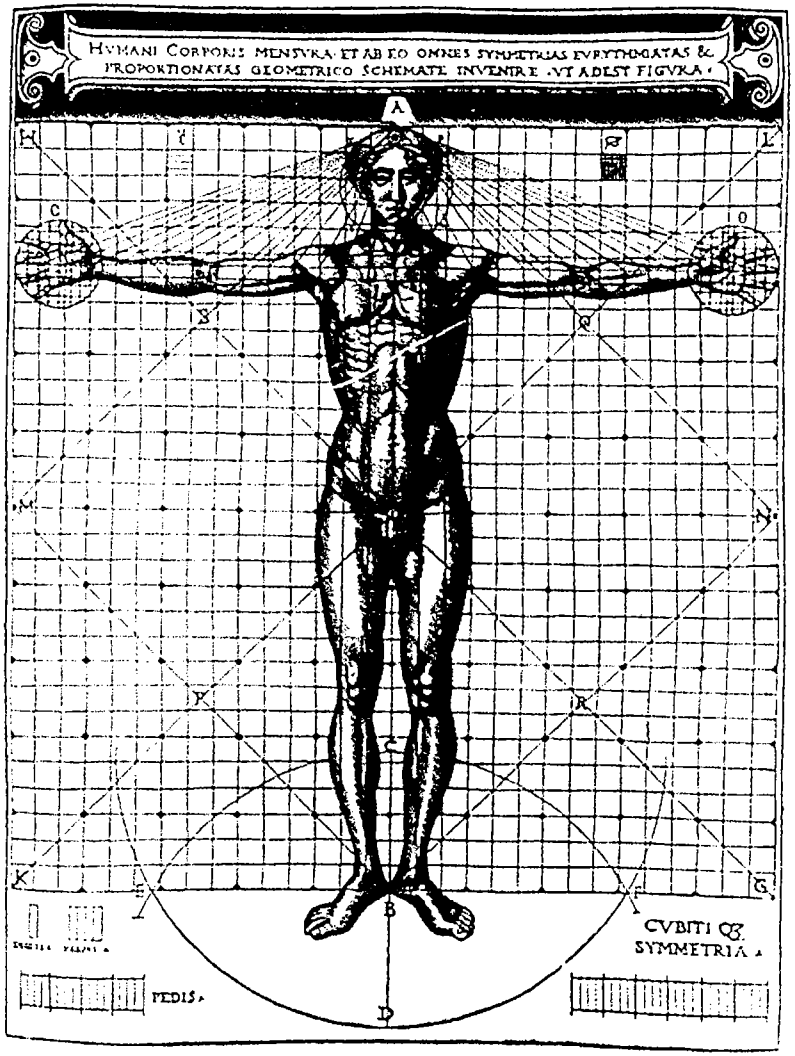

Figure 6. *Vitruvian figure.* Vitruvius, *De architectura*, book 1 (Florence, 1522). Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

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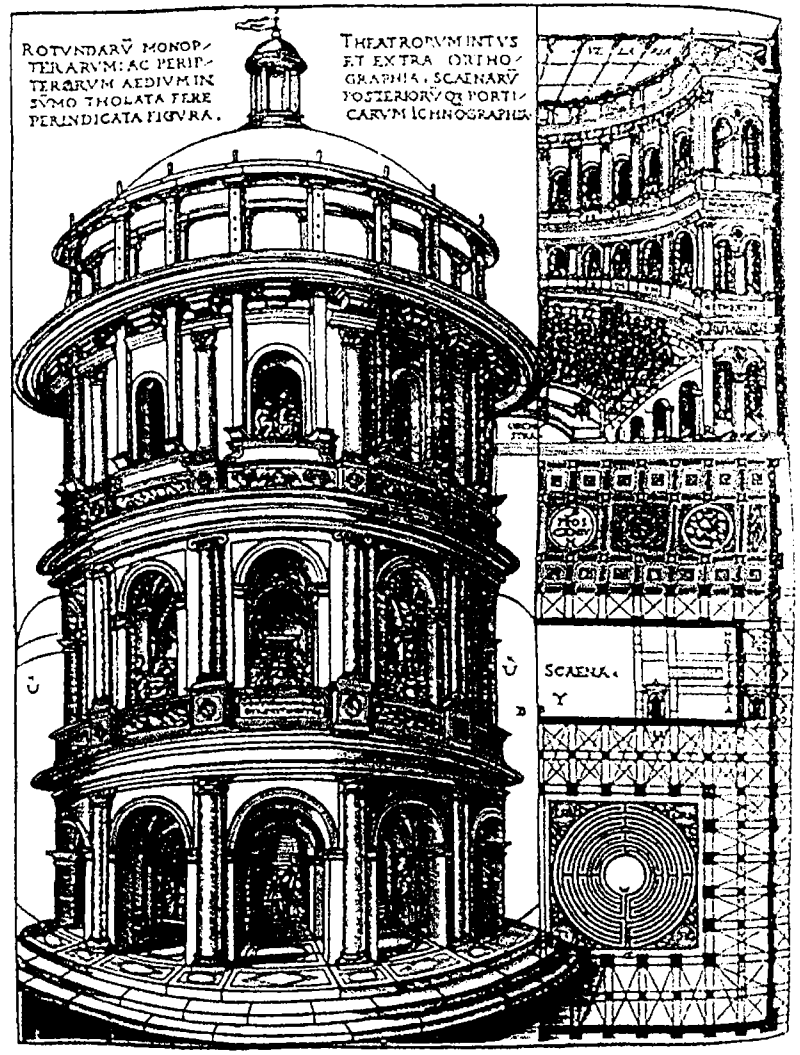

Figure 7. *Theatre design.* Vitruvius, *De architectura*, book 5 (Florence, 1522). Photo courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

human figure at Venice stands this same passage from book 3 of Vitruvius's *De architectura*. That drawing's combination of circular and square geometrical forms superimposed on the human body reappears in Leonardo's sketches of various church designs. These sketches remind us that, in its most basic definition, architecture is the creation of interior spaces for human occupants. Among many composed structures, those sketches are magnificently realized in the church of Santa Maria della Consolazione at Todi, which embodies Vitruvius's combination of circle, square, and human form along the lines of Leonardo's sketches (fig. 8). Responding to this fusion of Renaissance artistry and ancient theory, Rudolf Wittkower concludes: "How could the relation of Man to God be better expressed, we feel now justified in asking, than by building the house of God in accordance with the fundamental geometry of square and circle?" (25).

The Vitruvian background to Pandaemonium that I have sketched in this chapter should raise similar questions. Granted that the palace of Pandaemonium amounts to a perverted temple, a place of self-worship, is it possible that it also reflects a spiritual urge for harmonic relation with God? Whatever else they have lost, the fallen in *Paradise Lost* nonetheless seek encounters with goodness and divinity. Milton refers to the devils assembled in Pandaemonium as "[a] thousand Demi-Gods on golden seats" (796). Cesariano argues in his commentary on Vitruvius that master architects who can create the effects they desire appear like demigods, "come semidei" (1, fol. #2, 5). Blasphemy and aspiration to divinity are near akin. While Puritan reformers rightly mocked the greed and corruption of the imperial Roman church, seen in the lavish expenditure on St. Peter's no less than the "fretted Gold" crowning Pandaemonium, can the architectural achievements of Leonardo, Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Palladio be likewise mocked as merely wasteful? At the very least, should not a

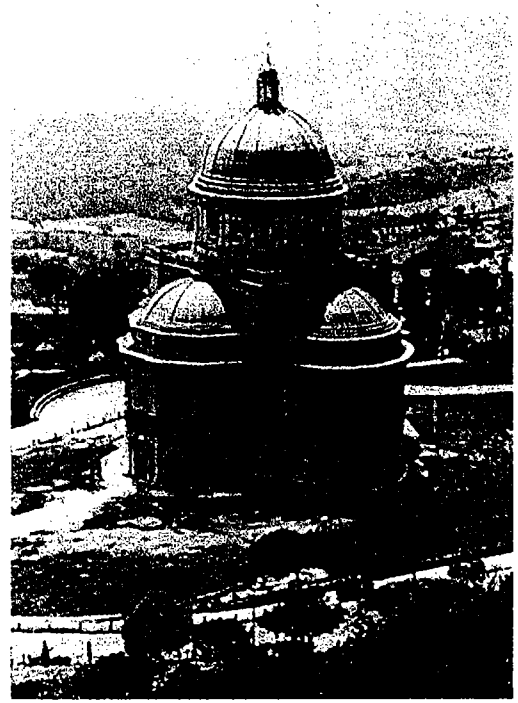

Figure 8. *Aerial view of the Church of Santa Maria della Consolazione, Todi, Italy, completed 1508.* Courtesy of the photo laboratory of Vincenzo Benigni, Todi.

full response to Pandaemonium also credit the impressive act of creation that its architect has left as a memorial? The Miltonic narrator, by the way, includes a teacherly bit of commentary on Pandaemonium aimed at ambitious architects. In accord with my argument for both positive and negative aspects of Pandaemonium, the advice he gives to architects and poets is at once uplifting and humbling. By looking upon Pandaemonium, human builders may "learn how thir greatest Monuments of Fame,/And Strength and Art are easily outdone/By Spirits reprobate" (695–97).